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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1157

INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 2293

RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 9315

RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 7570

RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 5395

RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3730

RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 5320

RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 0181

RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM PRIORITY 0842

RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 4442

RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 9878

RUEHBFI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 7165

RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0176

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 0023

RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY

RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY

RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000053

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INSB

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/25/2020

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [PTER](#) [FAID](#) [MOPS](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: LEFTIST JVP EXPLAINS SUPPORT FOR FONSEKA

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Classified By: AMBASSADOR PATRICIA A. BUTENIS. REASONS: 1.4 (B, D)

¶11. (C) SUMMARY: In a January 15 meeting with Ambassador, neo-Marxist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) party chief Somawansa Amarasinghe and JVP MP Sunil Hanunnett discussed the JVP's vision of a united, multiethnic, multi-lingual Sri Lanka; their support for Sarath Fonseka's presidential bid; their support for a truth commission, instead of a war crimes trial; and their view of the involvement of the international community in Sri Lankan internal affairs. END SUMMARY.

JVP REVAMPING IMAGE

¶12. (C) Amarasinghe described the JVP as a reformed Marxist Party, which stood for a united, multiethnic, multi-lingual Sri Lanka, with equality for all. He emphasized that they were not a nationalist party and believed strongly in multiparty democracy. The JVP was even in favor of a Tamil prime minister. The JVP also believed in devolving power as far as possible, including allowing villages to decide on the allocation of funds. On election violence, Amarasinghe claimed that although JVP members were forceful at demonstrations, they were very disciplined and avoided violence. He asserted that the JVP had never engaged in political violence during peacetime. (NOTE: The latter claim might only hold true if one accepted the JVP line that the 1971 and 1987-89 JVP insurrections, in which thousands lost their lives, could be considered "wartime." END NOTE.)

SUPPORT FOR FONSEKA

¶13. (C) Regarding JVP support for Sarath Fonseka's presidential campaign, Amarasinghe cited several reasons: 1) He was the only person who could defeat President Rajapaksa; 2) the JVP had never supported the current government (NOTE: This strains credulity. The JVP supported Rajapaksa in 2005 then grew increasingly alienated as Rajapaksa favored his own

party supporters over the JVP in government appointments.
END NOTE.); 3) Fonseka was willing to eliminate the executive powers of the president; 4) his focus was on education and health issues, not the military; 5) he was well-respected by the people; 6) he was very direct; and, 7) he had a broad vision for the future of Sri Lanka. Amarasinghe went on to add that Fonseka was marginalized after the military defeat of the LTTE because he was in favor of reconciling with former LTTE members. This convinced the JVP that Fonseka truly was committed to uniting the nation.

THE JVP AND RAJAPAKSA

¶4. (C) Amarasinghe was very critical of President Rajapaksa, saying he had a very narrow vision and an inferiority complex, which stemmed from the fact that he was not from one of the traditional power families. As a result, he suspected everyone, especially "learned people."

WAR CRIMES

¶5. (C) On the JVP's position on the war-crimes issue, Amarasinghe said there were human-rights violations in every war. In the last year of the Sri Lankan war, however, there were, in fact, far fewer human-rights violations than ever before. In terms of moving forward, he favored the idea of a "truth and reconciliation commission," not a war-crimes trial. He added that the JVP had issued a statement in favor of this approach, which was provided to the Ambassador.

INTERNATIONAL "INTERFERENCE"

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¶6. (C) Amarasinghe expressed opposition to any outside "interference" seeking to impose solutions on Sri Lanka, such as the UK government's drafting of a new constitution without consulting Sri Lankans. (NOTE: We assume Amarasinghe was referring to the joint British-Sri Lankan drafting of a constitution in 1948, which adopted many terms from British usage but also took into account local conditions. END NOTE.) Nevertheless, he went on to say that all countries had to surrender some of their sovereignty when they signed international agreements and that this gave other countries the right to interfere to some extent in other nations' affairs. He also said that there was no international conspiracy against Sri Lanka, claiming instead that the president's raising this issue was a sign of his election desperation.

COMMENT

¶7. (C) This presidential election has had many surprising developments, not the least of which is the alliance between the old arch-enemies of the right-liberal UNP and the neo-Marxist JVP. This represents, in part, opportunism on the part of both parties. But it also reflects the highly polarizing character of the Rajapaksas. The JVP supported Rajapaksa in 2005 but he alienated them by appointing cross-over (mostly UNP) MPs to ministerial positions coveted by the JVP, and the latter has been looking to settle the score ever since. At the same time, the JVP position appears to be more than opportunism and paybacks. While few Sri Lankans think of the JVP when they think about political reconciliation, we believe they are sincere in wanting to move the country forward to a new era of national peace and inter-ethnic cooperation.

BUTENIS